

TO: Tiverton Town Council
FROM: Tiverton Conservation Commission
DATE: March 21, 2007
RE: Proposed Amendments to the Tiverton Noise Ordinance

The Tiverton Conservation Commission is proposing amendments to the current noise ordinance in order to make the ordinance more understandable, user-friendly, updated, and enforceable. The Commission received input from the Town Council at two workshops held on February 16, 2006 and January 29, 2007. A public hearing will be held on Monday, March 26, 2007, 7:00 P.M. at Town Hall to receive input from town residents on the proposed amendments.

The proposed amendments are being sought as part of an overall initiative to abate noise pollution in Tiverton. This initiative will include a public education campaign to raise awareness about noise pollution, introduce ways residents and business can reduce noise and thereby reduce the number of complaints made to the police department, clarify steps necessary to obtain a noise variance from the Town Council, and outline procedures residents can take in dealing with any noise complaints they may have.

Excessive noise, or noise pollution, is a serious threat to the public health and welfare and the quality of life in Tiverton.

"The word "noise" is derived from the Latin word "nausea," meaning seasickness. Noise is among the most pervasive pollutants today. Noise from road traffic, jet planes, jet skis, garbage trucks, construction equipment, manufacturing processes, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and boom boxes, to name a few, are among the audible litter that are routinely broadcast into the air."

"Noise negatively affects human health and well-being. Problems related to noise include hearing loss, stress, high blood pressure, sleep loss, distraction and lost productivity, and a general reduction in the quality of life and opportunities for tranquility." <http://www.nonoise.org/>

As stated in the Comprehensive Plan, Tiverton is changing from a rural town to a more suburban community. Tiverton's residents are also changing from a population with deep roots in the community to a growing newly arrived population whose jobs take them outside the town. In addition, the town's rural south and Little Compton has become a designation for day-trippers during the summer months (Town of Tiverton Comprehensive Plan, pgs. 8 & 13). As the town changes and faces increasing pressures for development, noise pollution is expected to increase and continue to threaten public health, welfare, and the tranquility embodied in the town's rural character we are charged to protect. Amendments to the current noise ordinance along with a public awareness initiative are needed in response to these growing concerns.

Highlights of proposed changes to the current noise ordinance:

- Reorganized sections to make the ordinance more understandable and user-friendly;
- Updated terminology in the definitions section;
- Added a chart of real life examples of approximate decibels (Table 1);
- Added penalty procedures and fees that are clearly defined;
- Included the existing dog and building alarm system code regulations to this ordinance in order to combine noise-related code regulations in to one noise ordinance, and outlined procedures and penalty fees associated with violations from these regulations.

In the future, a noise variance application form will be developed and made available at the Town Clerk's office for residents seeking noise variances. Informative fact sheets will be developed as part of the noise abatement initiative and made available along with the applications.